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CHRISTIAN QUIETNESS:

A SERMON,

BY ROBERT SCOTT, M. A.

VICAR OF DULOE, CORNWALL: LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

LONDON,

J. G. F. AND J. RIVINGTON: OXFORD, J. H. PARKER.

SOLD ALSO BY

LIDDELL AND SON, BODMIN: BENNICKE, LISKEARD: HANNAFORD, EXETER: AND HEARD, TRURO.

MDCCCXLI.

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The following Sermon was preached by way of warning against a crying evil,—a series of (so called) REVIVALS OF RELIGION, *accompanied by such excesses as scandalized, or tempted to scoff, all who were not led away by them.*

Mr. Caswall's volume on THE AMERICAN CHURCH *may be referred to, in further illustration of the subject.*

R. S.

Duloe Vicarage, near Liskeard,
March 25, 1841.

St. John, i. 47, 48.

Jesus *saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile:*

Nathanael saith unto Him, whence knowest thou me? Jesus *answered and said unto him, before that Philip called thee, when thou wert under the fig tree, I saw thee.*

The Nathanael mentioned in this morning's lesson[a] has been supposed, both in ancient and modern times, to be one of our Lord's twelve Apostles. And it is very probable: for he is here described as called along with the earliest of the Apostles; and when his name appears again, in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel, he is in company with the Apostles:—aye, in company with them as a witness of their Lord's resurrection: when He gave to St. Peter, and through him to the other Apostles, their commission to feed His sheep.

Now, if Nathanael was an Apostle, he must be mentioned in the other Gospels under another name; just as we know that Levi is Matthew,—that Jude is Lebbëus and Thaddëus. And it has been very ingeniously shewn, that, from accidental circumstances, we can all but prove what that name was. Not Matthew or Jude; for we have just seen their other names:—not Peter, or Andrew, or Philip; for they are named along with Nathanael in

[a] Preached March 14.

this chapter:—not James, or John, or Thomas; for they are mentioned with him in the 21st:—not James the son of Alphëus; for he was a kinsman of our LORD, whereas Nathanael wondered how JESUS knew him:—most certainly not Judas Iscariot. There remain two,—Simon and Bartholomew: and it is with Bartholomew that Nathanael has been identified. In which there is also this probability,—that Nathanael is a name given in circumcision, (answering to our Christian names,) and so is Simon. And this Simon had a surname, as had his namesake, Simon Peter. But *Bartholomew* is, itself, only a surname, like *Bar-Jona*, *Bar-Timëus*, *Bar-Jesus*, *Bar-Abbas*: it is *Bar-Tholmai*, son, or pupil, of Tholmai or Ptolemy: so that this man *must* have had some other personal name given him in circumcision, whether that name was Nathanael or not. And besides this, it is here Philip who brings Nathanael to CHRIST; and in the gospels of both St. Matthew and St. Mark, the names of Philip and Bartholomew are coupled together in the list of the Apostles. [b]

So much, as a probable account of the Nathanael of whom our LORD speaks in the text. Let us set ourselves to consider the temper which drew down so hearty a commendation from our SAVIOUR:—a soul without guile, quiet and serene; seeking GOD in tranquillity of retirement and meditation,—in his garden,—under his fig-tree; as in the fine climate of Judea it was not unusual for holy men to seek communion with GOD in the open air, apart from all converse of their fellow men. Sojourning in a town, and in the house of another, Simon Peter retired to the flat roof for the purpose.[c] In the times of old it was thus that Isaac is mentioned as having gone out "to meditate (or *pray*)[d] in the field at the eventide," when he lifted up his eyes and saw Rebekah coming unto

[b] See Nelson's Festivals, and Newman's Sermons, (2, p. 368,) *St. Bartholomew's Day.*

[c] Acts, x. 9.

[d] So the margin of our translation, Gen. xxiv. 63.

him. And when we remark that so very few things are recorded of the Patriarch Isaac's life, and see how he was honoured in being made the type of our REDEEMER, we shall not think it without some reason that a thing seemingly so trifling is mentioned of him. Trifling as it may seem, it has, in Isaac and Nathanael alike, this importance, that it marks a character: and further, we see in the cases of Isaac and Nathanael alike, a character pleasing to GOD. It marks a holy calm and stillness of soul, such as seeks for GOD not in outward bustle or inward emotion, which, at the best, is but for a time: but in an even and orderly course of service,—not of cold and formal service, indeed, but of service and worship deep and heartfelt; and, from its very depth, calm and unruffled on the surface. When GOD revealed Himself to Elijah, "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind:—and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:—and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire:—and after the fire A STILL, SMALL VOICE."[e] And so it is not in noise and tumult, not in wind and storm, not in fire and fury, that the Spirit of the LORD reveals Himself either *unto* Christians, or *in* them: but the voice of the Spirit is *a still, small voice*. It was not by shouting and confused noise that the Captain of our Salvation foiled the temptations of the Evil One: it was in the depth of a solitary wilderness that he met him,—with all that was excitable, all of emotion and impulse, sobered and subdued by the endurance of a forty days' fast. Thus He, who put on our nature, that in it He might contend with the Devil, taught us how, alone, that nature can resist him; and how, therefore, we are bound to do it. And, when the Evil Spirit laid bare all his engines, to pervert and seduce, how was he rebuffed? Was it by much speaking? Was it by clamour, and uncontrolled bursts of enthusiasm? It was by the calm resistance of

[e] 1 Kings xix. 11.

a well-trained combatant, choosing from the armoury of God precisely that weapon which was best fitted to smite down the enemy, and wielding it with constancy and good courage. One touch of this weapon was enough. And the blow was dealt with quiet firmness, without discomposure, almost as it were without effort.

Again, there came a time when the Son of Man was led forth to sore trials of mockings, scourgings, buffetings, yea of ignominious death. This, which seemed the very triumph of the Evil One, turned out to be the triumph of the Redeemer. And how was it won? Was it by action and energy? Did He conquer by means of enthusiastic effort and loud-tongued profession, by visible strugglings and audible shriekings? No! By none of these things. The struggle, the anguish, the energy was within, repressed, pent up: but even by that means not wasted,—inexhaustible,—victorious. The Apostles had given vent to *their* enthusiasm; and in the hour of trial they failed:—he who had been the chief and loudest speaker, failed most miserably of them all. But such was not the conduct of our Example. His soul was exceeding sorrowful: He took the most trusted of His Apostles apart by themselves: He bade them watch and pray: but Himself went aside from all to endure that struggle in silence, broken only by one short sentence of prayer. This was the hour and power of darkness; the foretaste of the cross; the spiritual agony by which the way to our Redemption was opened. But all was done in secret and in darkness;—nay, it was done in silence,—save the words, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." It was done in solitude:—for were not they, who were to watch with him, sleeping for sorrow?

And in those parts of His sufferings which were necessarily public, what was the demeanour of Jesus Christ? Was it noisy or vehement, as if calling on all to witness the workings of His soul? No! Far otherwise! As it had been prophesied of Him in life, "I will put my Spirit upon Him, and He shall shew judgment to the

Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets:" [f] so the same prophet tells us, that in death "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth." [g] And in His life and in His death the prophecies were alike fulfilled. In patience possessed He His soul. Through meekness did He rise to glory; in silence bearing torture of body and agony of soul;—wrestling in Spirit secretly;—praying to His FATHER secretly;—communing with Him secretly;—just uttering a short sentence for His mother, a short prayer for His murderers. With one exclamation of bodily suffering, one burst of spiritual anguish, one cry with a loud voice,—It is finished! ere men could believe it, their power of tormenting was at an end: their victim, or He who had seemed such, was withdrawn.

And thus were we redeemed! Brethren, let me ask,—supposing that the account in the Gospel had been unknown to us, and men of this day from their own selves were to have devised the means, would it have been thus? Would it not have been,—if we may judge from the things which have been and are going on around us,—with wails and shrieks, prolonged, heart-rending? Would it not have been with all the pomp of suffering,—suffering prolonged to be looked upon, convulsive to be sympathised with? With ostentatious display of all, as a spectacle to men: with excitement and enthusiasm and temporary frenzy, in itself in all but intention blasphemous; in its consequences productive of revulsion, failure in duty, torpor, yea of scoffing and blasphemy which *is* intentional?

That many among us would have had it so, we have too much reason to fear. That it was not so, we see. Why then would it be so here when it was not so with CHRIST, but that there are those who know not what manner of Spirit they are of, [h] and that the Spirit that

[f] Isai. xlii. 1, Matth. xii. 18.
[g] Isai. liii. 7. [h] Luke ix. 55.

worketh in them is not the Spirit of CHRIST? Now we know that "if any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST he is none of His." [i] Nor are we left in ignorance of the way to discern this. "By their fruits ye shall know them," [k] saith our LORD. And what does His Apostle say that these are? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." [l]

Is it said that there are times when the Spirit manifests Itself in such a way that ordinary rules are at an end, and self-control and composure are no longer possible, because It is struggling within? It may be said: it sometimes is said. But St. Paul says that it is not true! St. Paul says that "the Spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets: for GOD is not the author of confusion, but of peace; as in all the Churches of the Saints." And let me remind you of the circumstances under which these words were written. The Church of Corinth was enriched by a plenteous outpouring of Spiritual Gifts,—manifest and undeniable miraculous powers. And what followed? *That they*, being carnally-minded, *abused those gifts*. Here is the first melancholy lesson:—that there is no gift of God which in this wicked world may not be abused: not even the miraculous outpouring of His Holy Spirit. And the second is like unto it:—that those who without contradiction possessed miraculous gifts might be (for the Apostle says *they were*) themselves not spiritual, but carnal. But again, how was it that they had abused these gifts? It was by meeting together, avowedly for the worship and glory of GOD: and when they came together "every one having a psalm, having a doctrine, having a tongue, having a revelation, having an interpretation:"—by their creating confusion:—by their wild demeanour in speech and action, on the plea that the

[i] Rom. viii. 9.

[k] Matt. vii. 20.

[l] Galat. v. 22.

Spirit gave them utterance. Their pleas, we find, were not so allowed of the Apostle, whom we must believe to have known what was the mind of the Spirit. He shewed that all this was not edifying: and that they had the power to control themselves, and were bound to do so. "Let all things be done unto edifying.....The Spirits of the prophets are subject unto the prophets: for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace; as in all Churches of the Saints.....Let all things be done decently and in order."[m]

If then, in these things, a Spirit is at work,—and works thus that which is not seemly,—what must we judge of it? Whether, indeed, it be of mere nervous excitement and hysterical agitation that these violations of God's Law take place in the very attempt to do him honour; or whether, in very truth, there be a Spirit which is at work in them, is another question. Nor need we be careful to answer in the matter, farther than that those, who are not ruled by the Spirit of God in this world, are the servants of the Evil Spirit, to whom they have given power over themselves. But if any are persuaded, that there is in these paroxysms something more than can naturally be accounted for, as the consequence of excitement on the temperaments of men,—on such persons I must solemnly call to obey the rule which the Word of God lays down, "Beloved, believe not every Spirit: but try the Spirits, whether they are of God."[n] I call on them to mark well, whether or no the manifestations be such as Holy Writ describes of the Spirit of God,—of Him, who "*did not strive nor cry, neither was His voice heard in the streets?*" Whether among their fruits are to be found "*peace, gentleness, meekness, temperance?*" Whether of such people "*the moderation is known unto all men?*" Whether they can lay claim to that "*ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is, in the sight of* God, *of great price?*" Whether to them

m 1 Cor. xiv. 26—40.

n 1 John, iv. 1,

"*their Spirits are subject,*" as they were to the prophets in St. Paul's days? Whether among them "*all things be done decently, in order, and unto edifying?*" Whether they are comporting themselves as the servants of that GOD who "*is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all the Churches of the Saints.*"[o]

And if with such Scriptures as these he cannot reconcile what he hears and sees, and yet is still persuaded that a spiritual influence is at work controlling man's agency in the matter, nothing remains for him but to go on to mark whether the work of other Spirits, as mentioned in GOD's word, will better account for the appearances.

We do, indeed, read there of one, "whom no one could bind, no not with chains,—neither could any man tame him: and always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones."[p] We do read of one, in the very synagogue, who "cried with a loud voice, and said unto the LORD, I know Thee who Thou art, The Holy One of GOD."[q] We do read of Spirits, which "came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art CHRIST the Son of GOD. But He, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak."[r] Do these descriptions suit better? Alas, brethren, if they do! For these were evil Spirits and unclean! GOD forbid that we should not have all charity for our fellows. But there are but three sources from which these appearances can possibly proceed. These three are,—Nervous bodily excitement:—Lying pretence:—or, The work of a Spirit. And if a Spirit it be, GOD's word tells us, too plainly, what manner of Spirit it is.

What then, Brethren? Are we not to be deeply affected by the sense of our own sins, and by the glad tidings of GOD's mercy? Undoubtedly we are! And that

o Isai. xlii. 1, Matth. xii. 19, Galat. v. 22, Philipp. iv. 5, 1 Pet. iii. 4, 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 32, 33, 40.

p Mark v. 3—5.

q Luke iv. 33, 34.

r Luke iv. 41.

not for one hour or one half-hour at a time, but hour by hour, and day by day:—not in outward show, but entering into our closet, and shutting our door, and praying to our Father which is in secret: communing with our own heart and in our chamber, and being still.[s] Are we not to set forth the great things that He hath done for us? Undoubtedly we are! But not by lip-service,—not by vain noises and gestures: not by "crying LORD, LORD:" but by the work of a life-time, by "doing the things which He said:"—by setting Him forth in our daily tasks and lives:—by "doing all to the glory of GOD:"—by "studying to be quiet and to do our own business, working,"——"not thinking to be heard for our much speaking."[t]

And, my brethren, while we look on such outbreaks of extravagance as most dangerous, and contrary to the Word of GOD, let us not forget that a caution may be necessary, even for those who are not led away by them. Let such think that they too have something to beware of: and that is, scoffing and mockery of the things of Religion. There may be delusion abroad, there may be blasphemy, there may be Evil Spirits working. If delusion, we ought to pity: if blasphemy, we ought to abhor: if Evil Spirits, we ought to fear and watch. In each and every case we ought to pray;—to pray that the error or the wickedness may be removed,—that "the power of darkness" may come to an end,—that the true fruits of the Spirit of the LORD may grow, and abound, and ripen. But it never can be otherwise than a deep and dangerous transgression, to mock and jest upon even the appearance—even the empty form or the false semblance of religion. "Fools" are they who "make a mock at sin." And remember, "Judgements are prepared for sinners, and stripes for the back of fools."[u]

[s] Matth. vi. 6, Psalm iv. 4.

[t] Luke vi. 46, 1 Cor. x. 31, 1 Thess. iv. 11, Matt. vi. 7.

[u] Prov. xiv. 9, xix. 29.

Be it ours, then, to pray without ceasing for the enlightening of those who are in error,—for the raising up of those who have fallen into sin,—for the release of such as Satan has enthralled: but, in the mean season, to have no fellowship with their works; remembering that, not in tumult and excitement, but "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," saith the LORD GOD.[w]

w Isai. xxx. 15.

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